

In Their Midst

Session 4. That You May Know the Lord

The plagues reveal the Lord's sovereign power while showing how repeated resistance can harden into settled refusal.

What We Found

The first nine plagues unfold in a deliberate pattern. Through them, the Lord makes his identity, presence, justice, and power known. Egypt's rulers and religious powers cannot match his authority or prevent him from distinguishing and protecting his people.

Pharaoh repeatedly receives warnings, asks for relief, makes limited concessions, and then withdraws them. His story shows the difference between recognizing God's power and surrendering to God's lordship. God remains sovereign, but he is not the author of Pharaoh's sin.

Voices of the Church

St. Clement of Rome, first century

St. Clement recalls Pharaoh and his forces as examples of people who hardened themselves through stubbornness and were consequently judged. This is a summary of his use of the Exodus account.

First Letter to the Corinthians 51.3-5.

How this is cited. The cited passage explicitly connects Pharaoh's opposition and destruction with his hardened, rebellious disposition. The wording here is a summary rather than a quotation.

For the group. Pharaoh's story warns us that repeated resistance can become a settled posture of the heart.

St. John Chrysostom, c. 347-407

St. John Chrysostom teaches that God did not make Pharaoh evil. God's patience and mighty works brought Pharaoh's already chosen resistance into the open, while displaying divine power for the good of others. This is a summary of his interpretation.

Homilies on Romans 16, on Romans 9:17-18.

How this is cited. The homily directly addresses Paul's use of Pharaoh and rejects the idea that God created Pharaoh's wickedness. The wording is an honest summary.

For the group. God's patience is not approval of sin. It gives room for repentance and reveals what our choices are becoming.

St. John Damascene, d. c. 749

St. John Damascene distinguishes divine foreknowledge from divine causation. God knows human choices without being the author of the evil freely chosen by rational creatures. This is a summary of his teaching.

An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith 2.30.

How this is cited. The cited chapter explicitly teaches that foreknowledge does not cause every human act and that moral choices lie within human freedom. Its application to Pharaoh is ours, while the doctrinal distinction is the saint's.

For the group. We do not have to weaken either God's sovereignty or human responsibility when reading Pharaoh's story.

Live It This Week

Practices

1. Make an honest examination of conscience focused on delayed obedience. Name one command, responsibility, or needed reconciliation that you have repeatedly postponed.
2. Pray Psalm 95 on three days this week. When you reach its warning about hardening the heart, pause and ask for the grace to respond promptly to God.
3. Choose one concrete act of surrender. Make the apology, end the dishonest practice, attend Confession if needed, or complete the act of obedience you have been bargaining around.
4. When asking God to remove a difficulty, add this prayer: Lord, do not only change my circumstances. Change my heart and teach me to obey.

Scripture Memory

Exodus 7:5

"The Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch forth my hand upon Egypt and bring out the sons of Israel from among them."

Exodus 7:5

Go Further in the Catechism

- CCC 304. Scripture confesses God's lordship while not always naming secondary causes.
- CCC 311. God is never the cause of moral evil.
- CCC 1730. Human beings possess genuine rational freedom.
- CCC 1037. God predestines no one to hell.
- CCC 2112-2114. Idolatry gives created realities the worship due to God.

Before next session. Read Exodus 11:1-13:16 before we meet again.